

Why you didn't get a raise in 2015, Clinton campaign pulls in \$55m, and will Trump's supporters show and vote? : US national blog roundup for 26 December – 1 January

USAPP Managing Editor, Chris Gilson looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway.

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President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Sunday, *Red State* [comments](#) that President Obama does not understand billionaire – and GOP presidential frontrunner – Donald Trump any better than the Republican Party establishment does. They say that while Trump is a creation of the GOP, he is more specifically a creation of the way that the party has dealt with the Obama administration.

On New Year's Day, *Post Politics* has the [news](#) that Obama is planning new curbs on guns via executive action, and on Monday will meet with the Attorney General, Loretta Lynch to finalize these measures. *Townhall* [writes](#) that if Obama does move forward with gun control measures, then his bill which would ease sentences for those convicted of drug trafficking offenses should be killed.

Moving on to the Democratic Party more generally, *Political Animal* [examines](#) the role of black women in the party, writing Monday that they are playing an increasingly active role in the political system, something that Democrats should not ignore. Still on the Democrats, *The Fix* [argues](#) that, currently only controlling one state house in the region, they are in real danger of becoming extinct in the South. One explanation for the party's decline in the South is its lack of appeal to poor, Evangelical, conservative, whites.

On Wednesday, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that Republicans are desperate to avoid a battle in the Supreme Court over

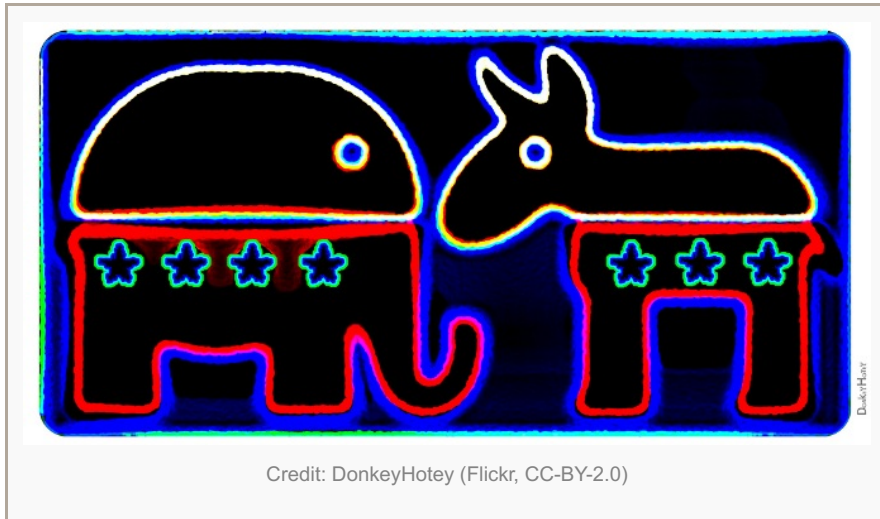


Credit: Elvert Barnes (Creative Commons BY SA)

President Obama's executive actions on immigration, which are now more than a year old. They write that if the Supreme Court takes up the case, then the GOP will have to argue against providing immigrants with deportation relief as the country prepares to go to the polls, something that is not likely to play well in swing states.

Elections and the road to 2016

As 2015 drew to a close, *Crooks & Liars* [comments](#) that it was the year that “the ref swallowed his whistle” as the media did a poor job of calling out the lies and untruths of many of the GOP's presidential candidates. Meanwhile, *Roll Call's At the Races* [looks](#) at 2015's ‘hangover’ issues for the 2016 elections; the woes of the GOP's establishment, national security, planned parenthood, immigration, and education.



On Sunday, *Outside the Beltway* [argues](#) that the US is not on the verge of becoming a multi-party system, despite what others have asserted. They say that while the Democrats and the GOP are coalitional in nature, these differing coalitions are business as usual for the parties, not a sign that they are moving towards splitting.

Political Animal looks to 2016's Senate races, [writing](#) that the odds are in favor of the Democrats this time around, with ten seats potentially in the running to change hands in that party's favor.

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

Turning to the Democrats' campaign, and their frontrunner, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton:

Hillary Clinton

- In playing up her status as a grandmother, is Clinton pandering to Hispanics? ([American Thinker](#))
- Clinton's campaign raised \$55 million in the last quarter of 2015 ([Post Politics](#)).
- Former president, Bill Clinton is set to play a bigger role in Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016 ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- Bill is actually more popular than Hillary – will his presence on the campaign trail really help her? ([The Fix](#)).
- With Bill set to hit the campaign trail, everyone seems to be taking turns to bash him ([Political Animal](#)).
- If Clinton loses the Iowa caucus to Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders in a few weeks' time, and then the New Hampshire Primary, will South Carolina be enough of a firewall for her? ([American Thinker](#)).
- The State Department this week missed its target for the number of emails it had been ordered by a federal judge to release from the time that Clinton had been Secretary of State ([Post Politics](#)).

Bernie Sanders

- This week saw the Senator for Vermont announce the support of an 11th By comparison, Clinton has 359 to date ([Post Politics](#)).

Martin O'Malley

- The former Maryland Governor's is facing a 'quixotic quest for relevance' in the upcoming Iowa Caucus ([Red State](#)).
- This week saw the news that O'Malley had failed to make the primary ballot in Ohio – he needed 1,000 valid signatures, but of the 1,175 his campaign submitted, only 772 were deemed valid ([Crooks & Liars](#)).



Former Governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley Credit: Maryland GovPics (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Jim Webb

- The former Virginia Senator would probably not be a viable independent candidate for the presidency ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- Given Webb's previous life as a Republican, perhaps he ran in the wrong primary? ([No more mister nice blog](#)).

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

Moving to the GOP's presidential primary, [Red State](#) says that it might be time for some conservatives to 'take a deep breath' because none in the current field of candidates are beyond criticism – the legislators among them have all voted for bills and budgets that conservatives may not agree with. *Townhall* also [warns](#) the GOP to not be too angry with Republicans for not being able to get enough done even though they control Congress; the alternative is Hillary Clinton in the White House – an even worse outcome for the party.

Monday sees *The American Prospect* [explore](#) why the Republicans' presidential candidates are obsessed with political correctness, commenting that it is related to the rhetoric of the conservative media, who regularly talk about what they're 'supposedly not allowed to talk about'.

United Liberty [writes](#) on Tuesday about electability, writing that simply because a candidate lost an election – as Mitt Romney did as the GOP's nominee in 2012 – does not mean that they are not electable. They say that the same argument around electability has come around again, this time over Florida Senator, Marco Rubio, who has relatively high favorability ratings and broad appeal.

[Red State](#) argues that the 'coming war' between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump will be a win for the GOP, as the latter's attacks on Bill Clinton may well be successful. Turning to commentary on the billionaire frontrunner:

Donald Trump

- Given that so many of those who are attending his rallies have never participated in primaries before, will Trump's supporters actually show up and vote in the Iowa caucuses? ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- *The Fix* has [more](#) on the risks behind Trump's infrequent voter plan in Iowa
- Why progressives shouldn't mind if Trump does manage to win in Iowa ([Occasional Planet](#))
- There is no right answer to the debate over the question, "Will Donald Trump win the 2016 election?" ([The American Prospect](#)).
- Television host Stephen Colbert claimed this week that Trump was simply his *Colbert Report* character with "\$10 billion" ([Crooks & Liars](#)).

- Trump appears to not know a great deal about healthcare ([Townhall](#))
- Among US adults, Trump tied with Pope Francis as the “second most admired man” in a recent poll ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- Admired or not, the New Hampshire *Union Leader* reckons that Trump is like the character Biff from the *Back to the Future* film series ([FreakOutNation](#))
- Trump and Bernie Sanders had a stoush this week after the billionaire referred to the Vermont Senator as a “wacko” following Sanders’ comments about better representing people’s economic interests. ([Post Politics](#))
- Following the *Union Leader*’s endorsement of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Trump has been lashing out at him as well as Sanders ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Given Trump’s difficulties with the *Union Leader*, are local media able to trip up Trump in a way that the national press can’t? ([The Fix](#)).
- Trump has spent next to nothing on his campaign compared to the other candidates. That might be about to change ([The Atlantic](#)).

Ben Carson

- Carson’s dreams of a ‘libertarian utopia’ if he were to be elected president by severely cutting the federal bureaucracy would be more like a ‘hellscape’ ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- This week saw Carson’s campaign lose three high-ranking advisers, including campaign manager Barry Bennett following the retired neurosurgeon’s polling drop ([Post Politics](#))...
- ... *The Atlantic* has [more](#) on the year-end collapse of Carson’s campaign.



Jeb Bush

- Monday saw the former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush challenge Donald Trump to a one-on-one debate ([Daily Kos](#))
- Why attacks between Bush and Ohio Governor, John Kasich, are pointless ([The Fix](#))...
- ...but why a new(ish) attack on Marco Rubio by Bush’s SuperPAC might work ([Post Politics](#))
- The Bush campaign also announced this week that it would be cancelling millions in ad buys from Iowa and South Carolina to focus on New Hampshire and on its Iowa ground game ([Red State](#))



Marco Rubio

- With primaries looming (especially in New Hampshire), both Jeb Bush and Chris Christie have taken aim at Marco Rubio ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- Why Rubio’s “scandal-plagued career” may have just become more interesting with new revelations about how he helped his brother in law (a convicted cocaine trafficker) to get a real estate licence when Rubio was majority whip in the Florida House of Representatives ([Daily Kos](#)).

Ted Cruz

- Is the Texas Senator “too Conservative to win” the 2016 election, like Barry Goldwater was in 1976? ([Red State](#))
- Too conservative or not, the Cruz campaign raised more than \$19 million in the last quarter of 2015 ([Post Politics](#))...
- ... a growth of 66 percent compared to the third quarter of 2015, with much of that from small donors ([Red State](#))
- What does Cruz’s book, *A Time for Truth* tell us about his candidacy? ([American Thinker](#)).



Ted Cruz Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

The rest

- Chris Christie’s campaign is enjoying something a revival – but did he help to combat terrorism when he was US Attorney in New Jersey, as he’s claimed? ([Powerline](#))
- If anyone cares, former New York Governor, George Pataki dropped out of the GOP nomination race this week ([Hit & Run](#)).

Government, the Beltway and Congress’ agenda

On Sunday, *Red State* [previews](#) January’s docket at the Supreme Court covering California’s teachers’ union dues, the legal rights of those who have been deported should they return, and on the political support of police officers for local candidates. *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that President Obama has told the Supreme Court to “butt out” of Colorado’s legalized marijuana law; Nebraska and Oklahoma have appealed to the Court to give them the right to stop the Centennial State’s legal marijuana business. Still on the Supreme Court, *Post Politics* [points out](#) that in 2017 four of the justices will be over 75 –including three who will be over 80.



Credit: MudflapDC (CC- BY-NC-SA-2.0)

This week, *Monkey Cage* [looks](#) at who the ten most effective lawmakers in Congress are. While some lawmakers are effective, *The Fix* [reckons](#) that speaking on the floor of the House or Senate is becoming increasingly useless, especially in the era of cable news interviews and social media. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that ahead of the New Year, Republican leaders in Congress have promised to return to “pointless, symbolic fights”, such as renewed efforts to repeal Obamacare.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Thursday, *Powerline* [wonders](#) if US foreign policy will go from bad to worse in 2016. They say that we should expect “more of the same”, but with increased success in combating ISIS. *The Daily Signal* this week [examines](#) how the Obama administration changed the US’ missile defense strategy, writing that it has focused on short and medium-range missile defense protection for its European allies, rather than concentrating on protecting the US homeland.

On regional strategies, *American Thinker* [says](#) that the US has “jumped from the Middle East Frying pan into the fire” following President Obama’s election in 2008, who followed the worst aspects of the recommendations of the advisors of his predecessor, George W. Bush. Closer to home, *Townhall* [argues](#) this week that President Obama’s Cuba strategy is making life worse for Cubans in that while its leaders have benefited from the more open relations between the two countries, they are still as repressive and hostile towards human rights as ever. On Tuesday, *The Daily Signal* [discusses](#) how millennials view foreign policy, arguing that it is a problem that a majority of those aged 18 to 34 would prefer that the US takes a less active role in foreign policy in favor of a greater focus on domestic issues.

The Atlantic [looks](#) at the lives of those Americans who live on military bases across the world, commenting that they have a kind of social and economic security that would be unknown to many in the US’ middle class.

Obamacare and health policy

Governors in some red states – South Dakota is one example – have been toying with the idea of expanding Medicaid. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that state fights over the expansion of Medicaid reflect a larger GOP fight over healthcare. Speaking of Medicaid, *The Daily Signal* looks at what they say is a “[budget gimmick](#)” that is costing taxpayers; the reimbursement of taxes to health care providers at the federal government’s expense.

The Daily Signal [reports](#) this week that Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chair of the Senate’s health committee, has predicted that bipartisan changes to Obamacare will be likely over the next few years, and that the program cannot be fixed by one party alone.

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [talks](#) on how doctors are experimenting with cutting health care costs, such as via apps that allow unhappy customers to request a refund. These costs clearly do need to come down; *Crooks & Liars* [says](#) that some desperate patients are turning to crowdfunding to pay their own medical bills. Is Obamacare contributing to higher health care costs? *American Thinker* [thinks it is](#).

The economy and society

Did you get a raise in 2015? No? *The American Prospect* has [four charts](#) which might help to explain why not – it’s mostly down to the severe reduction in workers’ power in the face of rising executive compensation. *Wonkblog*, meanwhile [writes](#) on the economic impact of gasoline being at \$2 a gallon – it’s has not helped growth as much as had been predicted, mostly because consumers are saving their savings on gas.

On Monday a grand jury in Ohio declined to indict two police officers for their role in the shooting death of 12-year old Tamir Rice in 2014. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that this case and others illustrates the difficulty in holding police to account when they kill civilians. On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at where guns used in crimes come from; Georgia is the biggest exporter of such firearms. *TPM* [wonders](#) this week if murder rates in the US really are



Credit: Chris Potter (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

going up, and using the example of New York concludes that while there may be have been an increase in the past year, this is in the context of a significant fall over the past two decades.

Hit & Run [reports](#) this week that US states passed 47 anti-abortion bills in 2015, an increase compared to 2014.

Featured image credit: Hillary for America (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USAPP– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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